

Date: January 30, 2025

FROM: Porter Dean Gustin  
E-MAIL- portergustin@trackittsports.com

ADDRESS: 670 S 300 Street  
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NCAA ECID NUMBER: 1403644057  
CASE NAME AND NUMBER:

**FILED**

FEB 03 2025 *g*

CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

*In re: College Athlete NIL Litigation, Case No. 4:20-cv-03919 - CW*

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter as my formal objection/appeal/disagreement with the NIL settlement figure that has been presented to me. I was offered \$57,094.05 and it appears \$0 in LOST NIL opportunities. This is far below the average settlement offer being given to other athletes in similar divisions in the sport of football. There is no question whatsoever, that had I been allowed to seek NIL opportunities, I would have been one of the top earning athletes in the country.

During my time at the University of Southern California, a PAC-12 conference member, I was the team captain. As captain I was used as the face of the team and was on numerous physical and digital promotional items including posters, handouts, digital media, and other advertisements. I made appearances on behalf of the University of Southern California and always projected a positive and professional image for the university.

On the field, I was a disruptive force and my biography, which is still accessible as of the date of this letter on the USC website lists some of my accomplishments;

**CAREER:** *He has 109 tackles, including 23 for losses (with 14 sacks), plus 4 deflections in his career. He has appeared in 31 games in his career, with 17 starts.*

**2018:** *The high-energy Gustin, often a disruptive force in an opponent's backfield, returns from 2017 injuries and will look to re-assume his starting outside linebacker job as a senior in 2018. He could be in line for post-season honors.*

**2017:** *Gustin began his 2017 junior season starting for the second season at outside linebacker before getting injured. He broke his toe in practice and had surgery to insert 2 screws prior to the Texas game, but played the first half of that game. He then injured his bicep against Texas and was sidelined the next 5 games, returning to play at Arizona State for the first half before being sidelined*

*the rest of the season while recuperating from both injuries. Overall in 2017 while appearing in 4 games (Western Michigan, Stanford, Texas, Arizona State) and starting twice (Western Michigan, Stanford), he had 16 tackles, including 3 sacks for 12 yards.*

*He had 7 tackles (with a sack) against Western Michigan, 4 tackles against Stanford, 4 tackles (with 2 sacks) against Texas while playing just the first half after having 2 pins inserted into his broken big toe several days prior and a tackle at Arizona State.*

**2016:** *Gustin started all season at outside linebacker as a sophomore in 2016 and proved to be a dominant force. Overall in 2016 while starting all 13 games, he had 68 tackles (second on USC), including a team high in tackles for loss (13 for 58 yards), plus he had 5.5 sacks for 42 yards and 4 deflections. He made **2016 Campus Insiders Sophomore All-American honorable mention and All-Pac-12 honorable mention.** He won **USC's 2016 John McKay Award** (underclassman with the most competitive spirit) **and Lifters Award.***

*He had a game-best 9 tackles against Alabama, then 6 tackles, including 2 for losses (with a sack), against Utah State and 4 tackles at Stanford. He had 13 tackles (1 for loss) at Utah (his home state), 2 tackles (1 for a loss) against Arizona State, 5 tackles and a deflection against Colorado, 3 tackles at Arizona and a tackle against California. He had 4 tackles (1.5 for losses) and 2 deflections against Oregon, then at Washington had 2 sacks among his 5 tackles and he also had a deflection. He had 4 tackles (1 for a loss) at UCLA and 8 tackles (with 1.5 sacks) against Notre Dame. He had 4 tackles (1 for a loss) against Penn State.*

**2015:** *Gustin was an often-used outside linebacker as a first-year freshman in 2015. Overall in 2015 while appearing in all 14 games (starting twice, versus UCLA and Stanford in the Pac-12 Championship Game), he had 25 tackles, including 7 for losses of 44 yards (with a team-high 5.5 sacks for minus 38 yards).*

*He had 3 tackles against Arkansas State, 2 tackles (1 for a loss) against Idaho and 1 tackle (0.5 sack) against Stanford. He had 5 tackles (0.5 sack) against Washington, 2 tackles (with a sack) at Notre Dame and 1 tackle against Utah. He had 2 tackles (with a sack) against Arizona, a tackle at Colorado, 4 tackles (1.5 sacks) at Oregon, 3 tackles (with a sack) against Stanford in the Pac-12 Championship Game and a tackle versus Wisconsin.*

Prior to my injury in my senior season, Barrett Sallee with CBS Sports wrote;

*"Gustin was one of the Trojans' top players, and an integral part of its defense. He tallied 10 tackles for loss and seven sacks prior to the injury -- tops on the team in both categories.*

The key contention I am making in this appeal letter is that my marketability was substantial. I have attached to this letter a number of articles from numerous publications on numerous dates focusing on my athletic prowess, my unique and novel diet plan, my weightroom habits and records as well as the expectations placed upon me by my team, teammates, and the USC and national community at large. There is absolutely no question that I would have had SUBSTANTIAL interest and subsequent deals from the multibillion dollar healthcare industry, fitness industry, health food industry, outdoor sports industry, along with athletic gear and apparel opportunities that USC, The PAC-12 Conference, and the NCAA benefitted from but I was denied the opportunity to benefit from. It defies logic to think that I would only be offered a little over \$57,000 when I was the highest recruited high school player in my state, an Army All American, projected early round draft pick, all while maintaining a stellar GPA, football statistics, and garnering national attention from the media while playing at one of the largest and most prestigious universities in the world.

Additionally, I was the subject of numerous articles, including Sports Illustrated, and NFL.Com's "freakiest players for 2017 (placing number 8 overall- <https://247sports.com/college/usc/article/porter-gustin-named-among-college-footballs-freakish-athletes--53386096/>) which focused on my standout abilities on the field and my work ethic and I was consistently listed as a top 10 player at my position by college insiders and draft specialists.

I excelled in the classroom as well even winning student athlete of the month in September of 2018 for football and maintaining a stellar GPA in the classroom as well.

With the overwhelming amount of media attention given to me and the amount that the University of Southern California used my name, image, and likeness to promote the school, its brand, and the athletic department, as well as college athletics overall, I do not believe there is any question that I am entitled to more than the \$57,094.05 amount offered to me.

I would like the ability to speak on my behalf or have my attorney speak on my behalf at the final approval hearing.

Sincerely,



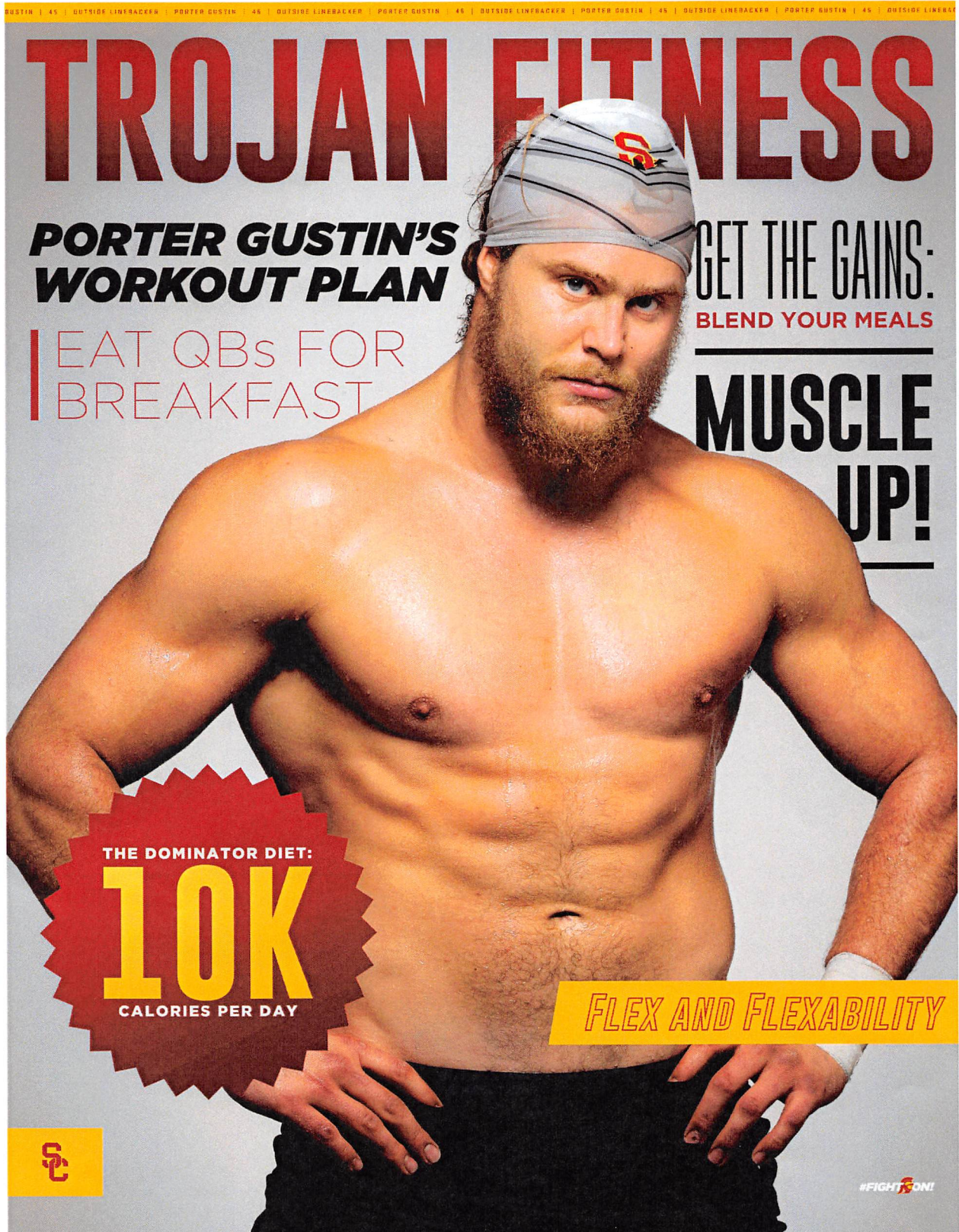
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Porter Gustin

PORTER GUSTIN

PHOTOS





The image is a magazine cover for 'Trojan Fitness'. It features a full-page photograph of a muscular man with a beard and a swim cap, posing with his hands on his hips. The man is identified as Porter Gustin. The magazine title 'TROJAN FITNESS' is at the top in large red letters. Below it, the text 'PORTER GUSTIN'S WORKOUT PLAN' is in bold black letters. To the right, 'GET THE GAINS: BLEND YOUR MEALS' is in black and red, followed by 'MUSCLE UP!' in large black letters. A red starburst graphic on the left contains the text 'THE DOMINATOR DIET: 10K CALORIES PER DAY'. A yellow banner at the bottom right says 'FLEX AND FLEXIBILITY'. The USC logo is in the bottom left, and the hashtag #FIGHTSON! is in the bottom right.

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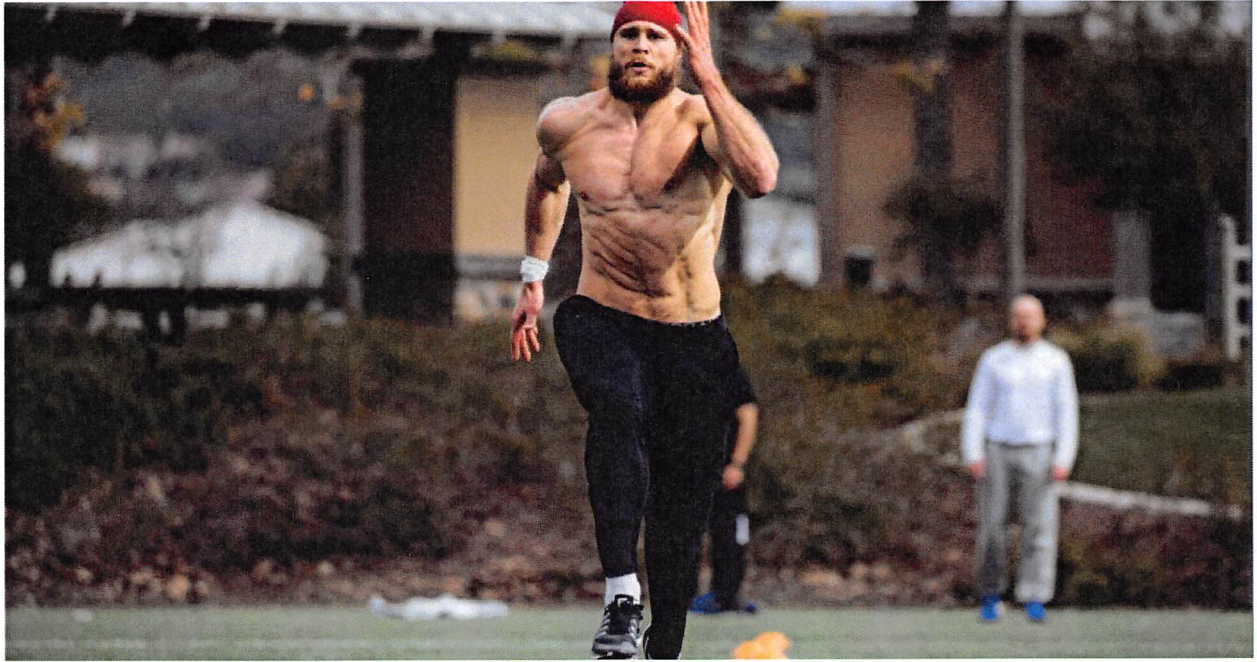
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# PORTER GUSTIN

USC Defensive Star Porter Gustin's  
Superhuman Look Is Built by a Super-  
Strict Diet



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## USC Defensive Star Porter Gustin's Superhuman Look Is Built by a Super-Strict Diet

Porter Gustin's diet isn't for most people. That's O.K.—not everyone needs the superhuman strength required to set the tone for USC's defense.

[Ross Dellenger](#) | Sep 6, 2018

Up Next - Steelers Must Give Broderick Jones ...



USC Defensive Star Porter Gustin's Superhuman Look Is Built by a Super-Strict Diet /



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LOS ANGELES — He has not eaten a candy bar nor ingested a carbonated drink in a decade.

He consumes more than 10,000 calories a day, blends most of his meals into greenish shakes and eats so many sweet potatoes that the soles of his feet and palms of his hands are an unnatural shade of orange. He has played a football game with a cast on each hand and two bloody screws protruding from a swollen big toe.

Up Next - Steelers Must Give Broderick Jones ...

He is missing an upper tooth, dislodged during another game, has hair down to his shoulder blades and completes 300 pushups and 300 situps before bed each night. He drinks more than two gallons of water a day, hasn't had a good piece of deep fried food since he was 14 and plays a position on the football field dubbed "Predator."

This is Porter Gustin.

"There's a reason he looks like a Marvel superhero," USC coach Clay Helton says of his 6'5", 265-pound edge-rushing team captain. "He looks like a cross between Captain America and the Incredible Hulk."

If Gustin wasn't already on your radar, it's probably because he played in just four games in 2017. A cracked toe cut short a promising junior season (three sacks and 15 tackles in the first 10 quarters), but he's one of the center] Up Next - Steelers Must Give Broderick Jones ... something he proved in the Trojans' season win over UNLV. Three weeks removed from a torn meniscus he suffered in camp, Gustin has been forced a fumble. "A little bit rusty," he told reporters. "Just getting a feel for a couple things."

Gustin is a most intimidating figure, especially when he arrives for an interview over the summer in workout gear after an “extra lift” in the weight room, his swollen arms uncovered and his powerful thighs bursting from his shorts. He participates in a lot of “extra lifts,” so many that coaches over the years—high school and college included—have urged him to at least take Sunday off, advice which he has finally taken.

To understand Gustin and that freakish body of his, you must understand his incredibly unique nutritional habits and workout regimen. “I’ll just give you today as an example,” he says. On this particular Friday in July, Gustin woke up at 4:10 a.m., chugged a Muscle Milk protein shake while lying in bed and then at 4:45 a.m. consumed his first of about a half-dozen blended meals. The other five are woven between a 5 a.m. stretching routine, conditioning drills at six, two weightlifting sessions, outdoor sled work that he watches later on video and a soft-tissue massage around 11. “His diet and the way he works out isn’t for most people,” fellow linebacker

Up Next - Steelers Must Give Broderick Jones ...

“You don’t suddenly turn that on and t



## USC Star Cameron Smith Nurturing His Dream to Be Both a Linebacker and a Winemaker

Even he admits that his blended meals are gross. Their greenish-brown color makes his coach uneasy, and their stomach-churning aroma chases his father John from the room. Gustin's most common blended meal includes chicken, sweet potato, brown rice, broccoli, spinach, a splash of water and a full bottle of Muscle Milk. He sometimes throws in salmon—that's when the smell is strongest. "It just tastes awful," he laughs. "The fish are the worst."

A different hunger lingers inside Gustin this year, rooted in the frustrations of a junior season disrupted by a bizarre injury. His right big toe was split down the middle when he stubbed it into a door after a win over Stanford in the second game of the year. The next Wednesday, doctors inserted two screws into the toe, and four days later, he started against Texas, battling through serious pain. He had two sacks in the first half, but at halftime doctors removed his right shoe and "blood poured out," Porter says. The screws loosened, the toe cracked back open and his season was lost. "He's now hungrier than ever," his father says. Up Next - Steelers Must Give Broderick Jones ...

Gustin was exposed to his first on-field contact in more than six months during spring practice, and it was like “you had a dog on a leash and you finally let the dog off to just go run,” according to Helton. “We couldn’t block him.” That’s why Gustin’s knee injury during fall camp was so disappointing. But what’s a little surgery to this guy? He underwent the procedure on Aug. 8, missed three weeks of practice and then spent some time in the backfield last week, rounding into shape in time for a crucial early showdown with the Cardinal, whom the Trojans beat twice last season en route to the Pac-12 title.



Brian Rothmuller/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

Gustin's eating habits make him one of college football's more unusual rising stars. He blends 90% of his meals, and his reasons are simple: quick consumption and easy digestion. After all, he has no time to eat in bites. Food isn't a luxury for Porter, his father John says, it is fuel. Gustin has been this way since he was in eighth grade, a scrawny kid who played football with bigger, older boys who used to refer to him as a "lightning rod" because of his slight frame.

That seems like so long ago, well before his athletically gifted family moved from Idaho to Utah when Gustin was 16. He still played quarterback then, before turning into a sought-after linebacker as a high school junior. John Up Next - Steelers Must Give Broderick Jones ... played quarterback at Wyoming in the mother, aunt and sister were, at various Gatorade basketball players of the year attended high school. But no one in this Porter, whose self-discipline and will power outsiders.



Gustin has a short list of approved restaurants, including Chipotle and Subway, and the only real fat he ingests comes from avocados, which he only consumes in a double-chicken Chipotle burrito bowl. John Gustin pulled into an Arby's drive-through during a recent camping trip with his son and some teammates, leaned out of the car window and said, "Roast beef on wheat bread. No cheddar cheese or sauce," and everyone in the vehicle knew it was Porter's order. "His mom one time was like, 'Yeah, Porter hasn't had a sweet since he was 11,'" Smith says. "I was like, 'Oh. O.K. That's pretty weird.'"

As a child, he ate apples for dessert while family members nibbled on cookies and downed pieces of cake. His high school teammates once played a prank on him by replacing his water with Sprite. He spewed the soft drink everywhere, the carbonation stinging his mouth after years without it. During his senior season while traveling on recruiting visits, Porter's father and high school coach placed wads of Up Next - Steelers Must Give Broderick Jones ... restaurant table—the prize if he were to *bite*, John begged his son. *Just one.* "He wouldn't do it."



Porter is converting his teammates to his strict nutrition plan. When Smith reaches for an unhealthy snack, “I literally think of Porter,” he says, “and I’m like, ‘What Would Porter Do?’”

The answer: not eat it.

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Published Sep 6, 2018



**ROSS DELLENGER**

Ross Dellenger received his Bachelor of Arts in Communication with a concentration in Journalism December 2006. Dellenger, a native of Morgan City...



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# PORTER GUSTIN

Devotion to weight room enables USC  
linebacker Porter Gustin to move mountains

SPORTS

## Devotion to weight room enables USC linebacker Porter Gustin to move mountains



USC linebacker Porter Gustin sacks Utah State quarterback Kent Myers during a game last September.  
(Photo by Ed Crisostomo, Orange County Register/SCNG)



By **JOEY KAUFMAN** | [jkaufman@scng.com](mailto:jkaufman@scng.com) | Orange County Register

UPDATED: September 1, 2017 at 9:24 PM PDT

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The boy relished the old tales, drawn to the legends.

When John Gustin was a teenager, he pored over the Storm Testament series, a collection of historical novels filled with accounts of the Mormon pioneers.

The fourth book stirred his imagination. It told of Porter Rockwell, a long-haired, bearded mountain man and bodyguard for Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

To be sure, Rockwell is a complicated figure of the Wild West. History remembers him as the “destroying angel.” The shotgun he carried wasn’t for show. On the other hand, he guided religious refugees across the American prairie and through mountain passes, helping them resettle along the Wasatch Front in northern Utah.

Gustin loved those Wasatch mountains, where he grew up, and so he loved the stories of Porter Rockwell. It was to his delight when he learned Rockwell had also helped the Gustin family cross the treacherous frontier in the 19th century.

So when his wife Scarlett gave birth to their second child, a blonde-haired boy, in February 1997, the couple already knew his name.

“That was never a debate,” John says.

They christened him Porter.

Two decades later, the family smiles when they mention the name. It fits. Porter Gustin, USC’s rugged, tenacious linebacker, who keys a veteran-laden defense expected to push for a College Football Playoff berth this fall, was named after a mountain man.

“Porter just seemed to fit right into the mold,” his father says.

On his trail, he’s left his own stories.

## **‘FEARLESS AND DARING’**

Motorists must travel well past Interstate 84 to find Emmett, Idaho, a town with a population of little more than 6,000, that sits 30 miles north of Boise.

Not long after John, a former Wyoming quarterback, and Scarlett, a former BYU basketball player, married, they settled on 55 acres there to raise a family, starting with their two oldest children, Gunner and Porter, after the boys began elementary school.

To Porter, 20, it was paradise. Idaho’s rural countryside offered an expansive wilderness, hordes of animals and tranquility.

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"How did you catch a rabbit?" John quizzed.

"I chased it around. It finally ran into a sagebrush and jumped onto the sagebrush, and I held onto it," Porter explained.

"But there's gotta be something wrong with it. It's wounded or something."

"No, it's good."

"Let's put it down and see what happens."

The rabbit darted off.

"My rabbit!" Porter shrieked.

He kept others as pets, some more exotic: lizards, spiders, tarantulas, a python. They kept a 7-foot boa constrictor until it bit Porter's right bicep, needing John to pry it off.

Porter was always out in the wild or playing sports. John refused to purchase a video game console for his boys, and Porter never cared.

"I couldn't work a remote," he says.

If he's ever in front of a screen, it's to watch shows that remind him of the wilderness, survivor reality shows like "Dropped" or "Naked and Afraid."

The mountains beckoned most of all. They still do.

Over the Fourth of July weekend last month, Porter retreated to the Sawtooth mountains in Idaho for a three-day backpacking trip with about a dozen family and friends, including Reuben Peters, a fullback for USC. They hiked at least 30 miles. Porter carried 150 pounds.

"A mountain goat," John says, "that's what we call him out there."

On the second day of the trek, the group got lost. They missed a turn around a lake. Porter grinned at the sudden obstacle. Adventure. They ultimately hiked an extra eight miles.

"He just grew up fearless and daring," John says.

Midway through high school, Porter and his family left Idaho, moving to Salem, Utah, about 15 miles south of Provo.

Quickly, Porter discovered Loafer Mountain, which sits at more than 10,000 feet a half-hour drive east. The views from the peak are stunning. On some evenings, hikers can see all 75 miles north to Salt Lake City, the lights stretching along Interstate 15. He longs for anywhere without cellphone service.

But he loves the journey most, circling his destination. It's why he climbs 80-foot pine trees in Utah, or harbors hopes of returning to visit Alaska — the 10 highest mountain peaks in the U.S. rest there and he's only gone to fish.

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A good challenge always drew the linebacker.

So when Porter enrolled as a freshman at Emmett High in Idaho, he heard it from his football coaches.

They called him a lightning pole.

"Time to put on some weight," they ribbed.

Porter estimates that at 14 he was 6-foot-2 and 150 pounds.

He loved push-ups and sit-ups, but a weightlifting program? That hardly seemed essential. For one, he was primarily a quarterback, like his dad. College programs such as LSU and Oregon first recruited him as a passer. He played on defense, but other high school teammates played two ways. Ultimately, lifting paid off, certainly after one high school game in late September 2013.

Porter, who had transferred to Salem Hills High with Gunner, started the season at quarterback.

But in a victory over Provo in the sixth game of the season, Porter injured his right throwing hand on a quarterback sneak as he extended the ball across the goal line for a touchdown.

"He didn't really fit the mold of hide your hands, because he's such a competitor," says Salem Hills coach Joel Higginson. "So he reached and reached."

A defensive linemen's face mask bent his thumb backward.

On the team's next offensive drive, Porter knew something was wrong.

"I don't why my thumb won't squeeze the football," he told Higginson on the sideline.

His hand was broken.

One doctor recommended surgery. A visit to a second doctor ended with a cast wrapped around his right hand. He was done playing quarterback for that season, but he starred at linebacker, even while breaking his left hand late as well, a prolonged setback. (It wasn't until last January, following USC's victory in the Rose Bowl, did he undergo surgery to fix it. This season will mark the first time since early September 2013 that neither hand is broken).

Porter soon realized the effect from the weight room. By his junior season of high school, he weighed more than 200 pounds. Because he was one of the strongest on the field, he was able to play through injuries and without much use of his hands. He barreled past mostly everyone. Scholarship offers from powerhouse programs rolled in after the season.

"Once you see results in the weight room, that's when you get hooked," Porter says. "But a lot of people don't go long enough in the weight room to see the real results and how it transfers over to the field. That's the part you really have to get over. And at that point, it's how can you not lift?"

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Past midnight on one trip, John awoke to the sound of deep breathing outside his tent.

"Porter, get to bed," John said.

"I got to finish," Porter replied.

A couple more sets followed.

While Porter also took part in high school baseball (his fastball touched 95 mph), basketball (he could dunk) and track and field (he did throwing events — shot put, discus and javelin), lifting emerged as his de facto fifth sport.

He stayed in the Salem Hills weight room as late as 2 a.m., running there as soon as he finished dinner at home.

Porter stayed later and later that Higginson eventually was forced to try one trick to get him to leave. He told Porter that the high school had installed a new security system. Alarms would sound off after midnight if they detected any movement.

"We're going to get problems with the district," Higginson warned.

The fib worked.

"That was the only way we could get out of the dang weight room," Higginson says.

## FEEDING THE FIRE

The challenge is met with a routine.

On most mornings, Porter arises at 4:30 a.m. and chugs a Muscle Milk or a protein shake prepared by USC's nutrition staff. He arrives in the weight room at USC's athletic complex by 6 a.m. The digestion has already started.

The rest of the team joins him in these early hours for mandatory lifting sessions. When he's finished, he begins about 90 minutes of soft tissue therapy to help with injury prevention and improve muscle flexibility.

John calls the weight room Porter's "sanctuary." In the evenings, he and other players also return there.

"Porter has changed the culture of this weight room," says Ivan Lewis, the Trojans' head strength and conditioning coach.

Lewis, who was previously an assistant strength coach at USC during the Pete Carroll era, compared him to past workout enthusiasts, linebackers such as Brian Cushing, Clay Matthews and Rey Maualuga and safety Taylor Mays.

"They were in the weight room all the time lifting," Lewis says. "It was awesome. And it was cool to lift and stretch back then — almost like breathing into the weight room to get an extra session

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"If an older guy were to skip out, that would be the cool thing for the young guys to see," says Peters, USC's fourth-year junior fullback.

Today, Porter catches most everyone's attention.

"Your first impression is he does look like a big ol' Tarzan, someone with the long hair, the facial hair, the missing teeth and all the muscles popping out," says Connor Murphy, a sophomore outside linebacker.

But Murphy added most players ultimately admire the smaller things for Porter "takes good care of his body."

A strict diet coincides with the weightlifting regimen.

Gustin squashes almost 10,000 calories per day, according to Andrea Vanderwoude, the team's nutritionist. He eats every two hours, each day finishing at least four protein shakes, a variety of blended meals with eggs, chicken, fish and steak, and then dinner. Last year, he would wake up in the middle of the night to down an extra protein shake. Trainers recommend he stop. Sleep is just as important.

He often probes Vanderwoude about what to eat. She recently recommended a book, "Nutrient Timing: The Future of Sports Nutrition," and later stumbled upon him reading it in the weight room between sets.

"Some people are like, 'I don't need to take foods I don't like to eat,'" Vanderwoude says. "He's like, 'Is it good for me?'"

Porter has long been diligent about maintaining a healthy diet.

His family said he gave up processed sugars when he was 11. His idea. He still refers to sugar as "cancer."

John said his son refused to cave. He brought up one family trip to San Diego. Porter was 16. While driving back to Utah, they stopped in Las Vegas, descending on the buffet at the Rio resort. John's cousins Joel Higginson and Dan Higginson had joined them.

The three of them waved hundreds of dollars in cash, promising it could all be Porter's should he pick out just one dessert. Perhaps an Oreo cookie?

"Never in the world would I do that," Porter responded.

John said Porter felt borderline insulted.

"You could get him to eat a grasshopper for a nickel, or a cricket for a nickel, because it's got a little bit of protein," Joel says.

One reason Porter's current diet is strict is to hold his weight. USC lists the 6-foot-5 linebacker at 255 pounds and in past seasons he saw his weight drop.

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In coordinator Clancy Pendergast's 5-2 defensive scheme, Porter lines up as the right outside linebacker, a position known as the "Predator," functioning as a hybrid edge rusher. Pendergast estimated Gustin lines up on the line of scrimmage 80 percent of the time, typically against an opponent's left tackle. Only on 20 percent of his snaps will he drop into pass coverage. He needs to be big, strong, flexible.

He adjusted well last season.

The analytics website Pro Football Focus reported this week that Gustin finished with the most total pressures among returning Pac-12 outside linebackers, emerging as a disruptive force.

When Pendergast joined the NFL's Arizona Cardinals in 2004, he tinkered with a 3-4 defense and that season started calling the right outside linebacker the "Predator."

It was appropriate, he reasoned. Like the rest of the southwest, Arizona is in the desert, filled with predators.

So, nowadays, Porter Gustin, the Trojans' wild linebacker, hunts quarterbacks.

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*Originally Published: August 29, 2017 at 6:10 PM PDT*

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# PORTER GUSTIN

Top LB recruit Porter Gustin chooses  
USC



## Top LB recruit Porter Gustin chooses USC



Cam Smith, USA TODAY High School Sports

February 3, 2015 1:13 pm ET



**Porter Gustin**, one of the top linebacker recruits in the nation and one of the top overall prospects in the state of Utah, officially committed to Southern California in a commitment ceremony Tuesday afternoon in the school gymnasium at his Salem Hills High School in Salem, Utah.

The four-star U.S. Army All-American narrowed his list of finalist schools to USC, Ohio State and Arizona State, but USC and Ohio State were widely seen as the strongest contenders for his services entering Tuesday's announcement. The atmosphere at the event was nothing short of circus like, with the school band in attendance playing the fight song between blaring background tracks from the likes of DJ Khaled and customized background banners that could have doubled at a Gatorade booth at a fitness expo.

In the end, the spotlight was pointed directly at Gustin, a two-way starter at Salem Hills who excelled as both a linebacker and quarterback. In addition to his 152 tackles and 10 sacks, he threw for more than 2,800 yards as a dropback passer. Wearing a full black suit and tie, Gustin and his family entered to the Salem Hills fight song, then had the band play the National Anthem before commencing with the formal ceremony. Salem Hills football coach



Joel Higginson introduced Gustin's father, John Gustin, who in turn gave thanks to numerous members of the school district and community in general, before finally handing off to Porter for his pick.

"I couldn't go wrong with any of these schools, but after a lot of thought and consideration I've decided that the best fit for me for the next four years of my life will be the University of Southern California," Gustin said as he donned a USC hat, before a troupe of cheerleaders celebrated his announcement by dancing to the Salem Hills fight song (which happens to be the University of Texas' "Texas Fight"), as played by the school band.

"I got to know their coaching staff pretty well over the past couple of months. I feel like they're a program on the rise. USC is a great program traditionally and I think they're going to go back to that. ... USC was one of my first big offers and they stuck with it right until the end. Everything about the school and USC's tradition was what really brought me to it."

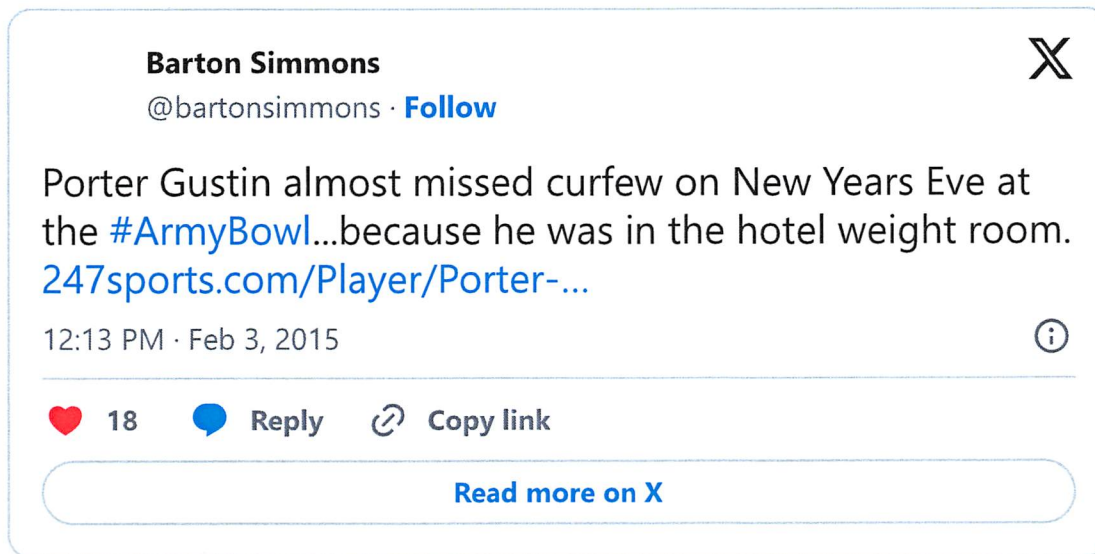
Gustin made it clear that Ohio State was a strong contender for his services, but was eventually swayed by USC's tradition and the commitment the Trojan coaching staff made to him throughout the recruiting process.

"Everything Urban had to say, it was hard to turn Ohio State down after the national championship and with everything Ohio State had to offer there. It was tough and came down to the last minute, but I feel like I made the right decision."



Yet there's little question about where Gustin will line up on the football field, with top programs from around the country chasing his signature to be a lynchpin linebacker in their systems. At a muscular 6-foot-5 and 245 pounds with great football instincts, there's no mystery why Gustin is seen as the perfect player to fill any program's need for an outside linebacker.

And there's no questioning his work ethic:



With his commitment over, and with National Signing Day just hours away, Gustin will soon be able to refocus on one of his two other sports: basketball. According to MaxPreps, the senior is averaging more than 18 points per game on the basketball court and had a sterling junior baseball season as well, finishing with a 2.33 ERA in 30 innings.

There is no word on whether Gustin would attempt to pitch in college, though it is expected he will focus on football full-time. Following a recent pitching showcase, Gustin said that he would leave open the option of playing collegiate football and minor league baseball simultaneously, depending on where he is drafted in the 2015 MLB Entry Draft in June.

# PORTER GUSTIN

## Impact Analysis: Porter Gustin

Published Feb 3, 2015

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# Impact Analysis: Porter Gustin

Mike Piellucci

TrojanSports.com Columnist



USC is setting itself up for a linebacker class for the ages and they don't come any bigger - literally and figuratively - than Salem Hills, Utah native Porter Gustin, who committed to the Trojans on Tuesday at a ceremony at his high school. Gustin is listed at 6-foot-5, 237 pounds and is every bit of that, if not even bigger. What makes him a five-star prospect, as well as Rivals' top-ranked inside linebacker in the country, is how well he moves at his size. Gustin isn't the type of player who will make a living in coverage like Osa Masina, his fellow Beehive State native and future teammate at USC. But he's got plenty of straight line speed for a big man and he's more fluid than most prospects his size, too. Gustin excels as a downhill player. He'll clean up the trash in the run game but perhaps his greatest strength is rushing the passer, and it's easy to envision him bulking up to the 270-pound range in his time at USC.

To that end, the biggest question is what position he'll ultimately play for Steve Sarkisian. USC has recruited him as an inside linebacker and we have no trouble envisioning him being successful if he does wind up there. But the Trojans already have Rivals 250 linebacker Cameron Smith on campus, who profiles as a



textbook middle linebacker himself. Moreover, with Gustin's frame having so much projection left, the possibility exists that he outgrows middle linebacker entirely, if not now then before he leaves campus.

Factor in his pass rushing-prowess and his best position may well be rush end. Not only does it jive with his skill set but the Trojans have a huge need at there with JR Tavai and his co-team-leading seven sacks off to the NFL. Scott Felix and Charles Burks are the returning players at the position but the former has been inconsistent throughout his USC tenure while the latter profiles as a role player heading into his final season. Jabari Ruffin is the wildcard and could wind up playing here if Su'a Cravens sticks at SAM linebacker, but he's working his way back from a knee injury that caused him to miss the entire 2014 season. The point is, playing time is available at rush end and Gustin has the skill set to be an immediate impact player getting after the quarterback. We'd be surprised if he's not on the field from the very beginning of his Trojan career.

# PORTER GUSTIN

Porter Gustin commitment is a fitting end  
to the state's most heralded football  
recruiting class

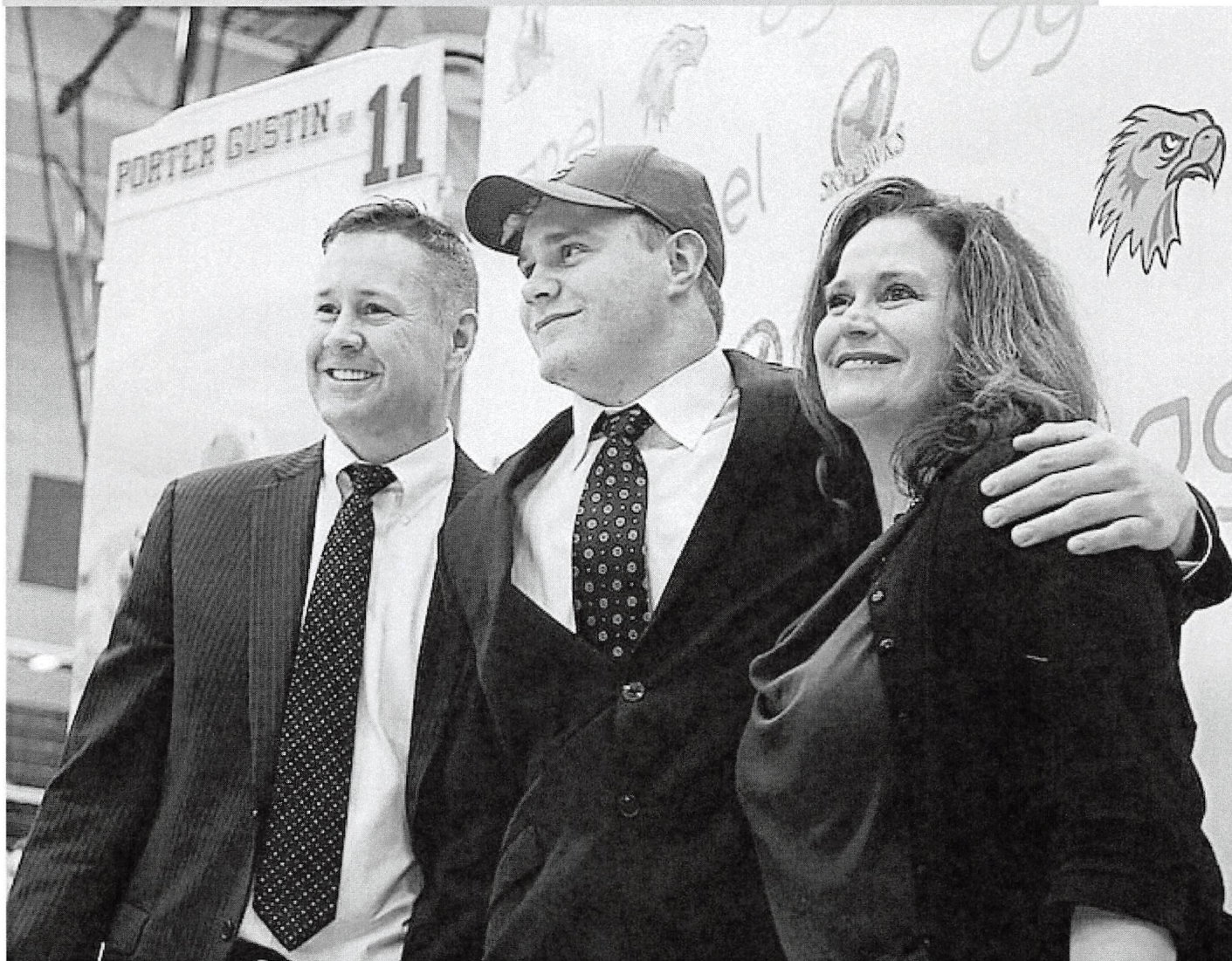
# Porter Gustin commitment is a fitting end to the state's most heralded football recruiting class

Published: Feb 3, 2015, 11:20 a.m. MST

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Salem Hills' Porter Gustin stands with his parents John and Scarlett after his announcement Tuesday, Feb. 3, 2015, that he will be playing for the USC Trojans, during an event at the school with family, friends and coaches around. Scott G Winterton, Deseret News  
**By Deseret News, Brandon Gurney**

SALEM — The recruitment process, of what most experts consider the state of Utah's best football recruiting class in history, reached an appropriate crescendo just before noon on Tuesday, one day before National Letter of Intent Day.

Banners, a pep band, confetti and even the national anthem accompanied the commitment announcement of Salem Hills' five-star athlete Porter Gustin inside his high school gym. Most media outlets were in attendance to gather footage and quotes of what could well be the most-heralded prep football recruit in state history.

Gustin's announcement followed other recent announcements of the state's other top prospects, such as Brighton's Osa Masina, who opted for USC, Timpview's Gabe Reid, who chose Stanford, and East's Christian Folau, who elected Oregon State.

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At the end of it all, Gustin chose USC over Ohio State, Arizona State, Utah and the first school to offer him, Dixie State.

"I feel like they're going to go up from here," Gustin said of his decision. "I love the coaching staff, and USC, it's a great program traditionally, and I think it's going to go back to that, so I don't think I can go wrong with them."

Resting on the Trojans didn't come until after much consideration by the 6-foot-5, 248-pound linebacker. Gustin had reached the stage where he was being courted by almost every top program nationally and certainly regionally.



“It was hard, but at the end of the day it was just a gut feeling,” Gustin said. “[USC] is where I felt most comfortable, so there, late at night, it just came to me. I just felt USC was the one.”

The late night turned into the early morning hours of around 2 a.m. Tuesday with Gustin yet to make up his mind. All the recruiting pitches had been made, and the family had discussed the options in earnest, but the final decision wasn't an easy one to come by.

With no one in the Gustin family able to sleep, John Gustin, Porter's father, sent his son a text.

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"I mean, we had to get going on this thing since we had the announcement all set up," John Gustin said with a laugh. “What I said is, ‘Get on your knees and pray, at least do that for me. [Porter] says, ‘I already have.’ ”

John Gustin then got understandably emotional when relaying his final text message to his son: “Then follow your heart and the spirit will prompt you. You have a destiny to fulfill somewhere. The Lord will guide you, if you let him. Good luck tomorrow and we love you.”

For a parent, leaving such a big decision completely up to your son isn't always an easy thing to do. For John Gustin, however, he knew his son had prepared sufficiently to make the right one.

From an early age, Porter Gustin showed signs of rising to become a legitimate national, five-star prospect.

“It really showed me how dedicated he was at a very young age,” John Gustin said. “His focus on his body, so that he could compete at the top echelon of athletics,

demonstrated to me that he had some special attributes. It's the work ethic that sets him apart."

Among Porter's attributes was abstaining from eating sugar while doing push-ups and sit-ups every night, no matter what. Through abstaining from such, he eventually reached the stage that was set for him Tuesday.

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"You expect it because you've seen how hard he's prepared himself for it," John Gustin said. "He's put the time in almost his entire life."

At 3:15 a.m. Tuesday morning, and after all the months of heavy recruiting, Porter rested on a final decision.

"USC it is. Just figured it out. Keep it quiet and goodnight," the text to his father said.

"It was hard, but at the end of the day it was just a gut feeling," Porter Gustin said. "[USC] is where I felt most comfortable, so there, late at night, it just came to me. I just felt USC was the one."

Later that morning, after grabbing at least some sleep, Porter began the worst part of recruiting, calling all the other schools, other than USC, to say, "Thanks, but no thanks."

"You feel that you just got several different families and now you have to tell someone that he's not coming there," John Gustin said. "That's the difficult part. The easy part is telling someone you're coming, the hard part is telling more that you're not."

## [View Comments](#)

By choosing the Trojans, Porter Gustin will have the opportunity to play at either linebacker or defensive end, according to what alignment coaches present — an

option that was attractive to him. Also attractive was the fact that USC was one of the first big-name programs, if not the first, to believe in his potential.

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“Everything went crazy after the USC offer came in,” John Gustin said. “They were there before he was a star, I mean before a two, three or a five star. They made it clear ... that they didn’t care if he was a two-star or a 20-star, to us [they said], you’re a five-star. I think

# PORTER GUSTIN

USC's pride of captains will lead the  
team in their season opener



# DAILY TROJAN



## USC's pride of captains will lead the team in their season opener

By TREVOR DENTON  
August 30, 2018



[<https://dailytrojan.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Screen-Shot-2018-08-30-at-11-compressed-2.jpg>]

Current senior outside linebacker Porter  
Curtis takes a knee to pray alongside his

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Lobendahn, safety Marvell Tell III, middle linebacker Cam Smith and outside linebacker Porter Gustin.

For the first time since 2013, a quarterback was not selected as a captain.

All four 2018 captains have experienced highs and lows during their respective careers with the Trojans. They all arrived when the program was in a difficult position, with head coach Steve Sarkisian being fired midway through 2015.

Yet, they head into their final seasons as Rose Bowl and Pac-12 Champions, looking to add to their hardware.

Lobendahn immediately made an impact upon joining USC in Spring 2014. Known for his versatility, Lobendahn started all 13 games as a true freshman while playing left guard and left tackle. Many took notice of his early success, and he was named a first team Freshman All-American by several publications.

However, the next two seasons were trying for the Cerritos, Calif. native. As a sophomore, he was sidelined for seven games with a torn left ACL. In the 2016 season opener against Alabama.

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# DAILY TROJAN



streak and Rose Bowl triumph, receiving a medical redshirt in order to preserve eligibility.

In 2017, Lobendahn returned to the field and reasserted himself as one of the Pac-12's premier offensive linemen. He started 13 games at left tackle, protecting quarterback Sam Darnold's blindside en route to a Pac-12 Championship. The 6-foot-3, 295-pound lineman earned All Pac-12 Second Team honors.

This year, Lobendahn leads the team as a fifth-year senior, projecting to start at center. Over his career, he's started 34 games at four different positions — left tackle, left guard, center and right guard.

The three defensive captains — Smith, Tell and Gustin — were all members of the 2015 recruiting class, which ranked No. 1 in the nation, according to Rivals.

Smith didn't waste any time before making his mark in Cardinal and Gold. Against Utah as a true freshman, Smith snagged three interceptions, returning one for a pivotal 54-yard touchdown. In the process, he willed the Trojans to an upset victory over the then-No. 3 ranked Utes. His performance garnered

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etched in Trojan lore. But Smith is no one-hit wonder. He's led the squad in tackles each of the past two seasons, even adding another interception against Utah in 2017.

As a junior last season, Smith further solidified himself as the rock of USC's defense. He set career highs in total tackles (112) and tackles for loss (11.0). He was an All-Pac-12 first team selection. Despite favorable draft grades, Smith elected to return for his senior season.

"I felt like myself as well as the team had a lot more to prove," Smith said at Pac-12 Media Day in July. "It just felt right, it felt perfect and I'm glad I did it."

USC's only returning captain from last season, Smith has been vocal about his passions off the football field. Last summer, he worked at a winery in Northern California. He plans to pursue a career in winemaking once he hangs up his cleats.

Tell has been a steady presence in the Trojans' secondary since arriving on campus in 2015. His first year was cut short by a broken collarbone, but he still managed 36 tackles as a true freshman.

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left.

The hard-hitting yet sneaky athletic safety made the All-Pac-12 first team in 2017, alongside Smith.

Gustin rounds out the quartet. The Utah-born outdoorsman is the Trojans' most fearsome pass rusher, having totaled 14 sacks and 23 tackles for loss in his career. Regarded as a physical specimen by players and coaches alike, Gustin is looking to finish his college career on a high note, having missed most of last season due to a broken toe and torn bicep.

Even in limited action, Gustin recorded three sacks in 2017. Early in fall practice, Gustin had another injury scare, this time suffering a torn meniscus after a collision. He has recently returned to practice, and the team expects he will play in the season opener.

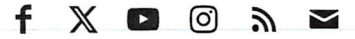
Lobendahn, Smith, Tell and Gustin have combined for 115 starts over their careers. They begin the final chapter of their USC careers this Saturday against UNLV.

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# PORTER GUSTIN

USC Athletics – What They’re Saying  
Porter Gustin

## USC Athletics

### What They're Saying: Porter Gustin



Clay Helton, USC head football coach: **"He's basically unblockable."**

Clancy Pendergast, USC defensive coordinator: **"You can really feel his presence out there."**

Ivan Lewis, USC head strength and conditioning coach: **"He's changed the culture of the weight room...He's a freakshow. He's a weight room changer. A football changer. Porter is a game changer."**

Chase Goodbread, NFL.com: **"He's proven he can be disruptive as a pass rusher and a run defender, giving him the all-around game that will propel him to stardom at the next level."**

Ivan Lewis, USC head strength and conditioning coach: **"If you want to know the one guy on this football team who can rattle off his day from when he wakes up to when he goes to bed, that's the guy. He has a routine, and it's awesome because he sticks to it. He knows exactly what he's going to do."**

Ronald Jones II, Tampa Bay Buccaneers tailback and former USC tailback: **"I've never seen anyone take care of their body the way he does."**

Cameron Smith, USC captain and linebacker: **"I remember rooming with him for camp my freshman year and the guy was up at 3 a.m. doing air squats and sit ups. That's just who he is. You kind of think, 'I want to be like that.'"**

Ivan Lewis, USC head strength and conditioning coach: **"Not many guys know who they are, but Porter knows exactly who he is and what he wants."**

Sam Darnold, New York Jets quarterback and former USC quarterback : **"He likes to rip up his practice jersey and his pants to show as much of his body as he can out there. But that's what makes him great, and that's what makes him, him."**

Johnny Curren, *ESPN.com*: **“An impressively built athlete, Gustin looks more like a seasoned vet than the green freshman that he is. He appears to be a natural fit at the rush end position in Justin Wilcox’s defense.”**

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# PORTER GUSTIN

USC Defensive Star Porter Gustin's  
Superhuman Look Is Built by a Super-  
Strict Diet



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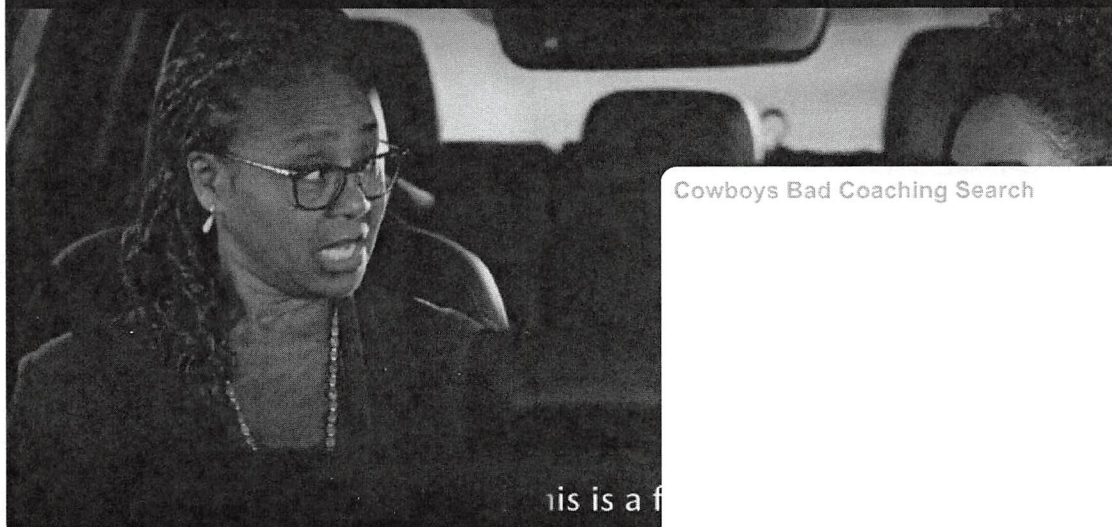
ON SI SI SWIMSUIT

# USC Defensive Star Porter Gustin's Superhuman Look Is Built by a Super-Strict Diet

Porter Gustin's diet isn't for most people. That's O.K.—not everyone needs the superhuman strength required to set the tone for USC's defense.

Ross Dellenger | Sep 6, 2018

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USC  
Diet

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LOS ANGELES — He has not eaten a candy bar nor ingested a carbonated drink in a decade.

He consumes more than 10,000 calories a day, blends most of his meals into greenish shakes and eats so many sweet potatoes that the soles of his feet and palms of his hands are an unnatural shade of orange. He has played a football game with a cast on each hand and two bloody screws protruding from a swollen big toe.

Cowboys Bad Coaching Search

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He is missing an upper tooth, dislodged during another game, has hair down to his shoulder blades and completes 300 pushups and 300 situps before bed each night. He drinks more than two gallons of water a day, hasn't had a good piece of deep fried food since he was 14 and plays a position on the football field dubbed "Predator."

This is Porter Gustin.

"There's a reason he looks like a Marvel superhero," USC coach Clay Helton says of his 6'5", 265-pound edge-rushing team captain. "He looks like a cross between Captain America and the Incredible Hulk."

If Gustin wasn't already on your radar, it's probably because he played in just four games in 2017. A cracked toe cut short a promising junior season (three sacks and 15 tackles in the first 10 quarters), but he's one of the centerpieces of USC's defense—something he proved in the Trojans' season-opening win 43–21 win over UNLV. Three weeks removed from surgery for a torn meniscus he suffered in camp, Gustin had a sack and a half and forced a fumble. "A little bit rusty," he told reporters afterward. "Just getting a feel for a couple things."

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Gustin is a most intimidating figure, especially when he arrives for an interview over the summer in workout gear after an “extra lift” in the weight room, his swollen arms uncovered and his powerful thighs bursting from his shorts. He participates in a lot of “extra lifts,” so many that coaches over the years—high school and college included—have urged him to at least take Sunday off, advice which he has finally taken.

To understand Gustin and that freakish body of his, you must understand his incredibly unique nutritional habits and workout regimen. “I’ll just give you today as an example,” he says. On this particular Friday in July, Gustin woke up at 4:10 a.m., chugged a Muscle Milk protein shake while lying in bed and then at 4:45 a.m. consumed his first of about a half-dozen blended meals. The other five are woven between a 5 a.m. stretching routine, conditioning drills at six, two weightlifting sessions, outdoor sled work that he watches later on video and a soft-tissue massage around 11. “His diet and the way he works out isn’t for most people,” fellow linebacker Cameron Smith says. “You don’t suddenly turn that on and then you’re Porter.”



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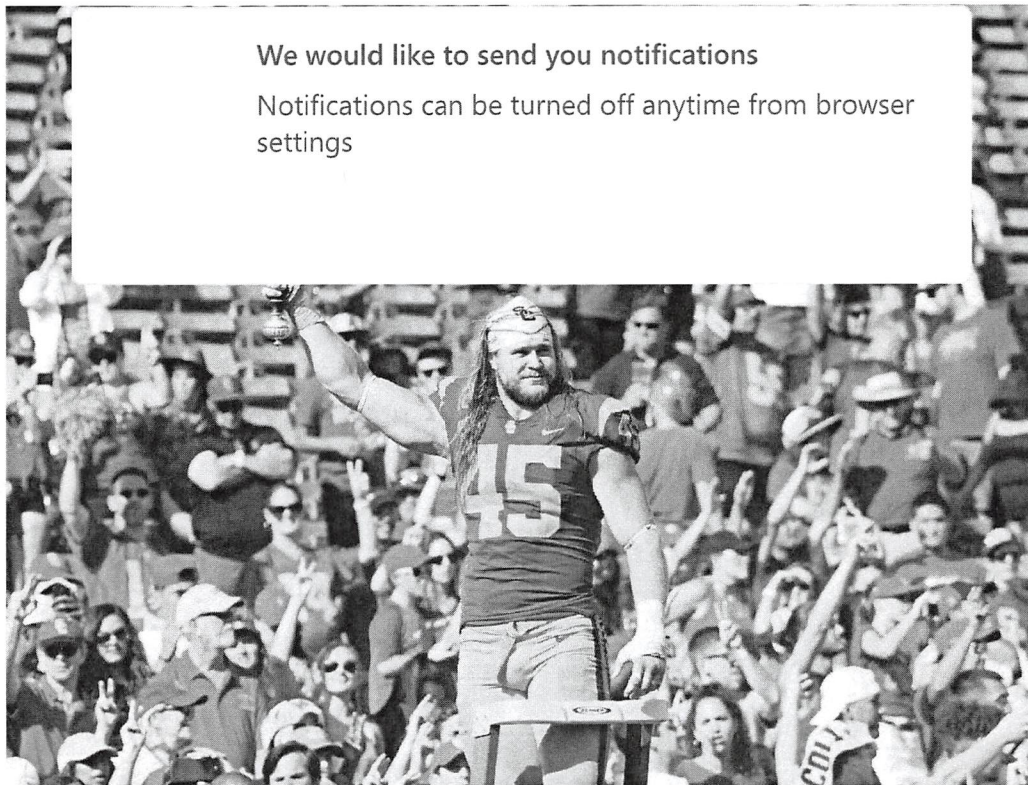
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churning aroma chases his father John from the room. Gustin's most common blended meal includes chicken, sweet potato, brown rice, broccoli, spinach, a splash of water and a full bottle of Muscle Milk. He sometimes throws in salmon—that's when the smell is strongest. "It just tastes awful," he laughs. "The fish are the worst."

A different hunger lingers inside Gustin this year, rooted in the frustrations of a junior season disrupted by a bizarre injury. His right big toe was split down the middle when he stubbed it into a door after a win over Stanford in the second game of the year. The next Wednesday, doctors inserted two screws into the toe, and four days later, he started against Texas, battling through serious pain. He had two sacks in the first half, but at halftime doctors removed his right shoe and "blood poured out," Porter says. The screws loosened, the toe cracked back open and his season was lost. "He's now hungrier than ever and fully rejuvenated," his father says.

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to this guy? He underwent the procedure on Aug. 8, missed three weeks of practice and then spent some time in the backfield last week, rounding into shape in time for a crucial early showdown with the Cardinal, whom the Trojans beat twice last season en route to the Pac-12 title.



Brian Rothmuller/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images

Gustin's eating habits make him one of college football's more unusual rising stars. He blends 90% of his meals, and his reasons are simple: quick consumption and easy digestion. After all, he has no time to eat in bites. Food isn't a luxury for Porter, his father John says, it is fuel. Gustin has been this way since he was in eighth grade, a scrawny kid who played football with bigger, older boys who used to refer to him as a "lightning rod" because of his slight frame.

That seems like so long ago, well before his athletically gifted family moved from Idaho to Utah when Gustin was 16. He still played quarterback then, before turning into a sought-after linebacker as a high school junior. John [Cowboys Bad Coaching Search](#) played quarterback at Wyoming in the mother, aunt and sister were, at various Gatorade basketball players of the year attended high school. But no one in this Porter, whose self-discipline and will power outsiders.

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Gustin has a short list of approved restaurants, including Chipotle and Subway, and the only real fat he ingests comes from avocados, which he only consumes in a double-chicken Chipotle burrito bowl. John Gustin pulled into an Arby's drive-through during a recent camping trip with his son and some teammates, leaned out of the car window and said, "Roast beef on wheat bread. No cheddar cheese or sauce," and everyone in the vehicle knew it was Porter's order. "His mom one time was like, 'Yeah, Porter hasn't had a sweet since he was 11,'" Smith says. "I was like, 'Oh. O.K. That's pretty weird.'"

As a child, he ate apples for dessert while family members nibbled on cookies and downed pieces of cake. His high school teammates once played a prank on him by replacing his water with Sprite. He spewed the soft drink everywhere, the carbonation stinging his mouth after years without it. During his senior season while traveling on recruiting visits, Porter's father and high school coach placed wads of [Cowboys Bad Coaching Search](#) restaurant table—the prize if he were to bite, John begged his son. *Just one.* "He wouldn't do it."



Porter is converting his teammates to his strict nutrition plan. When Smith reached for an unhealthy snack, “I literally think of Porter,” he says, and I’m like, “What Would Porter do?”

The answer: Don’t eat it.

# PORTER GUSTIN

Salem Hills' Porter Gustin is a freak, and the USC linebacker loves that description

# Salem Hills' Porter Gustin is a freak, and the USC linebacker loves that description

Trojan star hoping for a big senior year, coming off a season spoiled by injuries.



Southern California defensive end Porter Gustin (45) reacts to the snap during the second half of an NCAA college football game against Utah State Saturday, Sept. 10, 2016, in Los Angeles. USC won 45-7. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)

By Kurt Kragthorpe

| July 27, 2018, 3:43 p.m.

| Updated: 4:48 p.m.

## Comment

**Los Angeles** • USC's Porter Gustin is a freakish athlete, pass-rushing predator, conditioning consultant and Cameron Smith's conscience.

Whenever he's craving sweets, Smith hears the voice of his fellow linebacker. "I swear, I think about Porter," Smith said. "Would he look at me and say, 'Man, what a disappointment you are?' His discipline, his level of passion to be great, is something I think about all the time."

That's where the definition of "freak" expands, beyond the traditional label of a gifted athlete. Gustin, a senior from Salem Hills High School in southern Utah County, is proud to have made multiple lists of the most freakish college football players this summer. He embraces that description and teammates endorse it, because of Gustin's process, as much as the outcome.

Or does everybody do yoga and drink chicken, cauliflower, potato and raw egg smoothies?

Gustin made sports look easy at Salem Hills, where he also played basketball and baseball and competed in the javelin and shot put in track and field. His 14 sacks in three years as an outside linebacker for USC, even while he missed most of last season with injuries, have distinguished him, aside from his beard and flowing hair.

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USC coach Clay Helton even wants Gustin, in his own way, to help determine the winner of the Trojans' quarterbacking derby in August. Practices will include more live situations than usual. "They're going to see bullets fly," Helton said. "They're going to have Porter Gustin breathing down their necks to see how they function."

That's Gustin's game. And as it turns out, it takes a lot of work to become a natural athlete. Freak? That's a reward, not merely a designation.



“I’ve worked really hard on my body, my physique, over the last eight years or so,” Gustin said during Pac-12 Media Day. “It’s something that I’ve strived for, so to have that be the final outcome, it does mean a lot.”

He got there by going beyond the Trojans' standard workouts, although he had to learn to keep his own sessions within the framework of conditioning coach Ivan Lewis' strategy. He's an adviser and advocate for his teammates, having talked to Helton and the staff nutritionist about getting more food for the players.

Proper food, of course.

#### Report this ad

“He's a freak, in all sorts of ways,” Smith said. “He's so disciplined and just wants to be great. We all want to be like him, but it's tough because he's trained his whole life for his body to be like that.”

His family also produced Lauren Gustin, a Salem Hills basketball star who was named The Tribune's player of the year in March. She's headed to the University of Idaho, in the state where the Gustins lived before moving to Elk Ridge.

Porter Gustin will be a big hit at the NFL Draft Combine in February. He's 6-foot-5 and 255 pounds, with running, lifting and jumping skills that will produce remarkable numbers in those tests. He's also a productive football player who made 13 tackles in a 2016 loss at Utah, his only appearance in the state as a Trojan.

USC will come to town Oct. 20, during a senior season that Gustin hopes to maximize. The toe and bicep injuries that limited him to four games last year made him appreciate college football even more. “I’ve really grateful I’ve got another year to come out and play and show everything that I’ve worked for in the offseason and didn’t get to show last season,” he said.

Gustin and Smith, who plays inside linebacker, will anchor the defense of a USC team that is picked to repeat as the Pac-12 South champion. Smith made himself unforgettable to the Utes in October 2015, intercepting three passes (returning one for a touchdown) in the Trojans' win over previously unbeaten Utah. Gustin's role is labeled the “predator” in USC's scheme, with pass-rushing emphasis.

### Report this ad

The Pac-12 protocol is for each school to bring one offensive and one defensive player to Media Day. USC chose two linebackers, “because they represent what Trojans are,” Helton said. “They’re great players, they’re great men and great students. Both [will] graduate this semester. Both are going to play on Sundays.”

Gustin will become less of a freak in an NFL context, but he’ll undoubtedly find ways to stand out.

### **THE FREAKS**

College football’s “most freakish athletes,” according to NFL.com

- 1 • Ed Oliver, DT, Houston.
- 2 • Rashan Gary, DL, Michigan.
- 3 • Jabari Zuniga, DE, Florida.
- 4 • Dexter Lawrence, DT, Clemson.
- 5 • Porter Gustin, LB, USC.
- 6 • Jalen Hurd, WR, Baylor.
- 7 • Renell Wren, DL, Arizona State.
- 8 • Christian Wilkins, DT, Clemson.
- 9 • Jalen Moore, RB, Appalachian State.
- 10 • Paris Campbell, WR, Ohio State.

*Note: Utah State RB Darwin Thompson is No. 17, among the 18 players listed.*

# PORTER GUSTIN

USC Athletics – Game Changer

# USC Athletics



Game Changer

Football

Posted: October 20, 2017

By [Katie Ryan](#)

Assistant Sports Information Director

They say superheroes walk among us. Some may hide behind secret identities, but others may walk around in broad daylight for all to see.

With his long blonde hair, massive frame and huge muscles, USC's [Porter Gustin](#) could easily be mistaken for the Marvel superhero Thor. Thor is known for his superhuman strength and invincibility. When people first look at Gustin, they often see those same qualities.

"I get that comparison a lot," Gustin said with a smile. "And I definitely don't mind."

The 6-foot-5, 260-pound junior outside linebacker was even named after a Mormon superhero of sorts.

In the 1800s, a mountain man named Porter Rockwell traveled with the Mormon founder Joseph Smith to serve as a bodyguard.

"He was called the Destroying Angel because he would protect Smith and would be able to kill anyone who tried to hurt him. And he was really good at it," said Gustin. "Apparently as long as he kept his hair long he wouldn't be hurt."

Gustin's long hair, super strength and athletic ability makes it quite difficult to miss him on the football field.

"He likes to rip up his practice jersey and his pants to show as much of his body as he can out there," said quarterback [Sam Darnold](#). "But that's what makes him great, and that's what makes him, him."

"It's actually quite comfortable and gets some air flow. It is functional. I'm just a step ahead of everyone," Gustin jokes.

However, Gustin was not always the biggest person on the field. Growing up in Idaho with parents (who were collegiate athletes), he was destined to excel in sports. Gustin's father was a quarterback at Wyoming, and he began to follow in his footsteps playing the same position.

At the beginning of his freshman year of high school, Gustin decided to fully dedicate himself to earning a scholarship.



"When you're younger, you just rely on your athletic ability and how competitive you are," he said. "You just go out there and play. I was always the best player on whatever team I was on. But, I was a late bloomer when it came to hitting puberty when everyone gets their natural muscle. Everyone hit it before me, and I just stayed skinny and watched everyone else pass me up."

Gustin was determined to work even harder achieve his goals. He decided to take matters into his own hands.

"I got into lifting, and I said 'I'm going to eat right.' That's when I cut out sweets," Gustin said. "Every meal my mom made me, she knew not to give me sweets or bad food. She embraced it and went all out for me."

Then the fateful time arrived when Gustin hit his growth spurt. As he grew and put on muscle, he continued implementing his self-created lifting and diet program. Lifting became a huge part of his life and the weight room was his sanctuary.

After he and his family moved from Idaho to Salem, Utah, Gustin became the star athlete in his new town. In addition to playing both quarterback and linebacker, Gustin played basketball, baseball and threw for the track and field team.

"My goal for as long as I can remember was to play Division I sports," he said. "It didn't necessarily have to be football. I threw basketball out my sophomore year although I was excelling in it. I knew I wouldn't have the height. It was between baseball and football. I actually had my first scholarship offer in baseball from BYU as a pitcher. But, then I blew up with football. Plus, I like to lift weights, and I can do a lot of that in football."

The football scholarship offers began to roll in. Gustin was recruited by almost every major program in the country and was considered the top high school linebacker in the nation. After narrowing his choices down to USC and Ohio State, Gustin chose to move out west to Los Angeles.

Since becoming a Trojan, Gustin has been the definition of beast mode. He is the first person in the weight room in the morning, and he wants to be the last one there getting extra work.

"If you want to know the one guy on this football team who can rattle off his day from when he wakes up to when he goes to bed, that's the guy," said [Ivan Lewis](#), USC's head strength and conditioning coach. "He has a routine, and it's awesome because he sticks to it. He knows exactly what he's going to do."

"I've never seen anyone take care of their body the way he does," said junior running back [Ronald Jones II](#).

"I remember rooming with him for camp my freshman year and the guy was up at 3 a.m. doing air squats and sit ups. That's just who he is," said junior linebacker and captain [Cameron Smith](#). "You kind of think, 'I want to be like that.'"

Gustin's work ethic has inspired others. The 2016 Campus Insiders Sophomore All-American honorable mention and All-Pac-12 honorable mention is well known throughout the team for his extra lifting sessions. He has a crew of team members who join him daily for extra work.

"There's two types of leaders: those that lead vocally and those that lead by example," said Darnold. "He is definitely one of those guys who leads by example."

"He's changed the culture of the weight room," said Lewis. "We would get together after practice, and I'd show him things to do and then he'd want to do more. Then (fullback) [Reuben Peters](#) started joining him, then (linebacker) [Uchenna Nwosu](#). Then all of a sudden, there were 40 to 50 people on the football team this summer getting in extra work after we were done. Just doing extra stuff like some more arms or back or foam rolling or stretching. People were seeing that it was working for Porter, so they wanted to join in."

It would be hard to not buy into Gustin's training program. His reputation for improving his body extends

beyond the walls of the John McKay Center. Over the summer, he was named to the 2017 *Sports Illustrated* Freaks List.

"My workouts will inspire the other guys on the team," Gustin said. "I'll see a lot of guys come lift with us for like a week or two, but it drains them and they leave. But then they'll come back. We see them continue to come back over and over again. It's pretty cool to see a lot of guys come in and get after it."

While Gustin's extra workouts are difficult for athletes to maintain, even fewer of them could stick to his strict diet.

"I've done a lot of research," he said. "When I first started developing my diet, I just cut out sweets. That's how it started. It's really moved into something a lot more complicated. I know what I can eat and when I can eat it. Every meal is chicken, broccoli, sweet potatoes and carrots. Yesterday I had that meal like seven times. If it's not going to help my body function better, I will not eat it."

He doesn't just stop there. In order to consume more calories in a more efficient manner, Gustin will often blend his meals and drink them.

Gustin is extremely strategic when it comes to his choices. Everything is planned out and researched; he doesn't do things on a whim. He makes mature decisions.

"He's willing to be selfish as far as how he's going to take care of his body to get what he wants later," said Lewis. "He's not going to eat sweets or he's not going to put anything into his body that's wrong because he doesn't want to affect his playing capabilities now or his chances of playing in the NFL later. Everything he does is calculated to be the most effective Porter that he can be."

Gustin has never been short on motivation. In 2016, he won USC's John McKay Award for the underclassman with the most competitive spirit. The desire to be successful is what drives him.

"There's a lot of people in my town that almost make it," Gustin said. "I would hear so many stories of people that were super athletic and talented, but never actually played at a Division I school. Or others made it, but screwed up and got kicked out. I wanted to be different from them."

He has been different. This is seen in his confidence when he steps on the field.

"I think I'm fearless," said Gustin. "I try to be. I remember when I was still skinny and playing high school football, my friend and I would always talk about being fearless in games. He was a middle linebacker and I was an outside linebacker, and every time before a play we would look at each other and say 'No fear this play. Play with no fear.' That really stuck in my brain, and it's something I really worked hard on over the years. Every time I step on the field, I definitely have a no fear mentality. I don't care if I get hurt. I don't care what happens. There is going to be no fear."

That no fear attitude is reflected in his statistics. Throughout his career at USC, he has amassed 108 tackles with 23 for loss and 14 sacks. He collected three of those sacks against Texas this season. Those numbers would be even better, but he has been out the last three games due to a severe toe injury.

One of Gustin's most unique characteristics isn't his strength or size, but his strong understanding of who he is at such a young age.

"Not many guys know who they are," said Lewis. "But Porter knows exactly who he is and what he wants."

Imagine an angry grizzly bear charging you at full speed. It's what opposing quarterbacks see when Gustin sprints towards them for the sack. That's probably why some people have called him "the scariest man in college football".

"Ahh it's the best feeling!" he said with a massive grin. "It's just really exciting, but it's also a relief like it's finally all paying off. It really reveals the efforts of hard work."

Gustin may look like Thor, but he's also referred to by other names.

"He's a freakshow," said Lewis. "He's a weight room changer. A football changer. Porter is a game changer."

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# PORTER GUSTIN

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## NFL.com: Porter Gustin among 'most freakish' athletes for '18

OLB Porter Gustin was tabbed as one of NFL.com's most freakish athlete for 2018.



By CHRIS TREVINO

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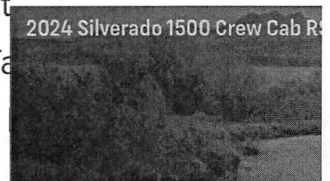
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### 410 Gone

For the second consecutive year outside linebacker **Porter Gustin** was named among NFL.com's most freakish college football athletes for 2018, coming in at No. 5 over the weekend.

Gustin's junior season was limited to just four games as he battled a fractured bicep, injuries he suffered against Stanford and Texas, respectively. He faced the Longhorns the week he received toe surgery against the Longhorns, recording two

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first half before being pulled. He finished the year 16 total tackles, three sacks and three TFL. Despite the injuries, his No. 5 ranking is actual a bump from his No. 8 spot in 2017. Here is what NFL.com writer Chase Goodbread had to say about the 6-foot-5 Gustin:



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freakish toughness with freakish athletic skill. He played with two broken hands as a high school star in 2013, and didn't undergo surgery to repair one of them until January 2017, after two full seasons at USC. Now entering his final season as a Trojan, he brings the same intensity to his training as he does to the field. At 255 pounds, the pass-rushing linebacker was timed at 4.5 seconds in the 40-yard dash prior to last season. With a bench-press max of 475 pounds and a 35-inch vertical jump, he's built like a tank, and as his Twitter background photo indicates, he isn't shy about showing off his physique."

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The senior is fully healthy for his final season after participating in spring expected to return to his starting Predator position, where he brings 109

sacks and 23 tackles for a loss. Gustin shined in his first season as a starter in 2016, recording 68 tackles, a team-high 13 TFL and 5.5 sacks.

Gustin was ranked ahead of Baylor wide receiver Jalen Hurts and behind Clemson



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list, Gustin the highest rated of the three and one of two linebackers on the list. This also continues a four-year streak of a Trojan being named to the "most freakish" list. Titans cornerback Adoree' Jackson made the list in 2015 and 2016.

The Utah native's preseason honors have been toned down compared to last summer, but Gustin was also named to NFL.com's Top 150 players to watch in 2018 (No. 41) and he was pegged as a future NFL star by Goodbread.

Gustin was the No. 28 overall recruit in the 2015 class and the No. 4 outside linebacker, according to the 247Sports Composite. USC will open the season on Sept. 1 against UNLV.